

The University of Chicago

THE EVANGELICAL
MISSION COVENANT OF AMERICA:
BEGINNINGS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

JUNE, 1945

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CHAPTER XII

THE FOUNDING OF THE COVENANT

The Tabernacle Covenant Church of Chicago initiated the movement which ultimately led to the founding of the Mission Covenant. Preliminary discussions had been held during the fall of 1884 by members of the Tabernacle church board "who looked with dismay upon the divisions among the Christians."¹ These men brought their observations to the official board which concurred in the expressed desire that a merger of all Mission Friend churches be attempted. By action of the church board, the proposal was brought before the regular congregational business meeting.² This

¹A. L. Skoog and A. A. Swensén in a signed article in the Missions-Vänner, a religious and political periodical published by the Mission Synod in 1874 and later sold to a publishing company, September 15, 1889, describe the events leading up to the founding of the Covenant. The above article was written in answer to a charge made in the Chicago-Bladet that the Covenant had been organized "through cunning and with the purpose of destroying an already planned association which the leaders within the Mission Synod feared that they would not get under their control." Chicago-Bladet, a religious and political publication established by the independent Swedish dissenters in 1877, charged Björk and other leaders within the Mission Covenant of "power politics." Refuting this charge, Skoog and Swensén reveal that it was the leaders within the Tabernacle, an independent congregation which had left the Mission Synod, that took the initiative. The most prominent leaders in the Tabernacle at this time were J. P. Eagle, Skoog and Swensén. Mr. Eagle was chairman of the church, superintendent of Sunday school and deacon. Mr. Skoog was a trustee and secretary of the church, as well as assistant Sunday school superintendent and choir director. Mr. Swensén was deacon and superintendent of all charities within the church. These three and possibly others within the board were the men who held the preliminary discussions. It is of interest to note that the congregation at this time was without a regular pastor; Rev. F. M. Johnson, who was later to play an important role in the organizational meeting, was called to the pastorate on November 27, 1884, while the congregation had given its authorization to call a meeting for the purpose of effecting an association among the churches on November 3, 1884. See Protokollbok för Svenska Missions-Tabernakel Församlingen av Chicago, Illinois, pp. 86-88.

²See Protokollbok för Svenska Missions-Tabernakel Församlingen, November 3, 1884.



meeting took favorable action and authorized the church board to call a meeting to consider the possibility of union of the churches of the Swedish Mission Friends. Its decision read:

The question was raised whether the congregation desired to have a large mission and ministerial meeting with the purpose of effecting an association among Christian churches. It was decided to notify by mail pastors over the entire country of this and to ascertain their opinion about the purpose of the meeting as well as the best time for it.¹

The official church board thereupon met in special session. C. A. Björk, chairman of the Mission Synod, was present by invitation. He also brought C. V. Julin, the chairman of his church. Also present was Rev. F. M. Johnson who had arrived that same day to assume the pastorate of the Tabernacle Church. Johnson had been a member of the Ansgar Synod and, in a way, represented the viewpoint of that organization. The Tabernacle church through its board represented the independents. Björk is said to have "manifested astonishment at the proposal and expressed his surprise in an almost reproachful tone" that the Tabernacle church, which had but recently withdrawn from the Mission Synod, would take the initiative in the merger proposal.² Finally, however, Björk was won over to the viewpoint of the board and it was decided to send a circular letter of inquiry to the Mission Friend pastors and leaders asking their opinion with regard to an organizational meeting. Pastors Björk and Johnson were delegated to send these letters; in case of a preponderantly favorable reply, they were authorized to extend the invitation to the meeting.³

The circular letter in general was received favorably by the pastors. It received the endorsement of the members of the Mission Synod central board in session at Randolph, Kansas, December 4-8, 1884. That board also decided to meet in advance of the organizational meeting and to notify the Ansgar Synod board through

¹ Ibid.

² Skoog and Swensen in Missions-Vänner, September 15, 1889.

³ Ibid. See also Axel Mellander, "Nå hur var det?" Missions-Vänner, August 14, 1889. "It has been told me," says Mellander, "that only after considerable hesitation Björk accepted the commission to share in extending the invitation to the meeting." Cf. Mellander, "Ännu några ord," Missions-Vänner, August 28, 1889; also "Hvem har rätt?" Missions-Vänner, September 15, 1889.

its chairman.¹ Acting upon this sympathetic response, an invitation signed by Björk and Johnson was extended. It read as follows:

It is herewith publicized that the meeting already proposed for merger and coöperation between the Mission and Ansgar Synods and the independent congregations commences, God willing, with a public service in the Mission Tabernacle on the south side and the Mission Church on the north side of Chicago, Illinois, Wednesday, February 18, 1885 at 7:30. As this meeting is of great importance and significance for the future work of missions in this country, we hereby urge pastors within both synods, as well as appointed delegates from independent congregations who desire to join such a constituted work to be present in a body and to share in a brotherly way in the deliberations which occur in both of the Mission churches on the south and north sides of Chicago. Meetings for edifications are held simultaneously in both churches. Brethren who plan to remain over the conference will kindly notify in time any one of the undersigned.²

This invitation, which appeared in several issues of the Missions-Vännen, caused something of a sensation in many quarters. The Chicago-Bladet immediately began to discuss the implications of the proposed meeting and charged that it was motivated by a desire for more power by some of the leaders. Under the title "The question of merger of Christian churches for co-operative work," Princell wrote a series of articles in the Chicago-Bladet in which he treated the meaning of sects and parties and proceeded to cite the organization which had been formed during the years among the Swedish immigrants in America.³ He charged that these

¹Protokollbok för den Sw. Ev. Luth. Missions Synoden. These are the original minutes of the Mission Synod. They are extant in two volumes and will be referred to as Missions Synodens Protokoll. See II, 51-52.

²See the issues of Missions-Vännen during January and February, 1885.

³The first of these articles dealt with the Covenant in Sweden, whose organizational plan he accepted in the main, and which embodied the following points: (1) no centralized board or authority for the congregations; (2) no encroachment on the rights and responsibilities of the church, either in doctrine, faith, discipline and work, or calling, ordaining and sending out of pastors to the churches, for this the churches themselves ought to do; (3) free and direct counsel and co-operation of the churches and mutual support of one another; (4) the exercise of a most careful concern by churches for the moral standards and loyalties of the pastor. In the second part of his statement, Princell, in a penetrating analysis, treated of the organizations which already had been established and failed because they had no Scriptural

organizations came into being because of the desire for power on the part of certain individuals, and not because there was a need for authority among the churches. While this may not be openly stated, the agitation for a new organization is, nevertheless, he claimed, a desire to control schools, missions, preachers, and press. He contended that history and experience teach that the diminution of spiritual power in the individual and in the church is an invariable sign that man has tried to substitute organizations, rules, and order for true spirituality. Having traced the origins and inherent weaknesses of the three previous organizations, Princell concluded that all of them failed to reach the people because they were founded for selfish purposes, self-aggrandizement and power. According to him, the merging of the Mission and Ansgar Synods would merely mean a new party and a new schism. The coöperation of churches should be attained because of the inner spiritual unity in Christ already existing between Christians, and not because of an external authority which is foreign to New Testament teaching.¹

precedent. Thus, for example, the weight and aim of the first ecumenical meeting in Jerusalem was realized in the truths which had been enunciated in answer to a specific request. The Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Synod, and the Ansgar Synod had failed to accomplish anything because they were perpetuated as man-made organizations. See the issues of Chicago-Bladet during January and February, 1885. Also, Josephine Princell, J. G. Princells Levnadsminnen. På uppmaning av svenska evangeliska frikyrkan samlade och utgivna (Chicago: J. V. Martinsons tryckeri, 1916), pp. 133-48.

¹Princell pointed out that the New Testament encourages helpfulness and benevolence, that much is said of conduct and faith for the individual and the church, and that meetings for counsel and edification are spoken of, but without reference to the necessity of formal organization. Moreover, he challenged the argument that a united organization was necessary and in harmony with the New Testament teaching for the carrying on of missions at home and abroad, the supporting of schools, the fostering of unity and peace, discipline in the churches, the guarding against parties and partisans, and the combating of heresies and injurious influences. This program is unknown to the New Testament, he said, but it is given to the Holy Spirit to order, rule, and lead, and this takes place when independence, freedom, love, and brotherliness have complete control in the church. See Chicago-Bladet, January and February, 1885; also Princell, Levnadsminnen, pp. 133-48.

As announced, the conference opened with a devotional service in the Tabernacle on Wednesday evening, February 18.¹ F. M. Johnson spoke inspiringly on the text, "I am a companion of all that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."² It was a powerful presentation of the need for Christian unity and furnished the keynote of the conference. It is said to have made a deep impression on the audience, expressing their own hope and desire for an organized and visible union and fellowship with all true Christians. Johnson was followed by C. A. Björk, who stressed the spiritual unity and oneness of believers in Christ. On the basis of this already existing internal unity, he pleaded for an external and visible unity of all the groups represented in the conference. S. W. Sundberg, a third speaker, dwelt upon the word "Covenant" as used in Psalm 89: 3, suggesting it as a biblical name for harmony and unity. He expressed a fervent hope that the conference might be instrumental in allaying the quarrel and strife between brethren and in healing all previously inflicted wounds by means of brotherly love.³ "This preliminary service," says Bowman, "was never to be forgotten by those who had the privilege of being present."⁴

The business meeting convened the following morning, February 19. About fifty delegates were present, but later arrivals brought the number up to sixty-two.⁵ Björk and Sundberg were chosen chairman and vice chairman respectively. Four secretaries were elected: E. G. Hjerpe, A. Mellander, C. M. Youngquist, and

¹The initial evening service was held only at the Tabernacle.

²Psalm 119: 63.

³Hjalmar Sundquist, "The Mission Covenanters. An Outline of History," Covenant Memories, 1885-1935. Golden Jubilee (Chicago: Covenant Book Concern, 1935), pp. 71, 73.

⁴Bowman, The Mission Covenant (Chicago: Covenant Book Concern, 1925), p. 142. For the entire organizational meeting, see C. A. Youngquist, Hem-Missionären, Kristlig tidskrift för ungdomen, hemmet och församlingen. Utgiven av Svenska Evangeliska Missionsföreningen i Nebraska, Omaha. It was published from April, 1892 to December, 1893. See the issue for October, 1893.

⁵The list of delegates was as follows: E. A. Skogsbergh, Minneapolis, Minnesota; C. W. Boquist, Red Wing, Minnesota; C. M. Youngquist, Essex, Iowa; E. G. Hjerpe, Galesburg, Illinois; A. G. Larson, Bishop Hill, Illinois; C. J. Nyvall, Sweden; J. P. Lindell,

Nels Peterson. Committees on arrangements, credentials and program were elected.¹

J. G. Princell was present at the meeting and, through Skogsbergh, requested membership in the meeting, although he was neither a member of any synod nor delegated by any church. His request brought a heated discussion; he was asked if he was the author of the series of articles which had appeared anonymously in Chicago-Bladet in opposition to the objectives of the meeting.

Whitehall, Michigan; J. W. Carlson, Stillwater, Minnesota; K. Eriksen, Moline, Illinois; S. W. Sundberg, Jamestown, New York; N. Peterson, Lindsborg, Kansas; F. Edquist, McKeesport, Pennsylvania; John E. Johnson, Chicago, Illinois; E. O. Staaf, Lindsborg, Kansas; Th. Norlin, Joliet, Illinois; G. Gustafson, Ridgeway, Pennsylvania; J. Wenstrand, Chicago, Illinois; A. Larson, Ottowa, Kansas; J. Gustafson, DeKalb, Illinois; C. A. Berggren, Coin, Iowa; C. H. Lundin, Lincoln County, S. Dakota; L. Larson, Odebolt, Iowa; Emanuel Berg, Des Moines, Iowa; F. O. Hultman, Sioux City, Iowa; J. G. Christenson, Chicago, Illinois; Constantin Olson, Brantford, Kansas; C. P. Mellgren, Osage City, Kansas; P. Peterson, Brooklyn, New York; John Peterson, Oakland, Nebraska; C. J. Edoff, Mead, Nebraska; J. P. Grubb, Holmes City, Minnesota; A. A. Magnuson, Princeton, Illinois; A. E. Wenstrand, Paxton, Illinois; D. Magnus, Ludington, Michigan; A. P. Zakrisson, Lake Station, Indiana; C. A. Björk, Chicago, Illinois; C. R. Carlson, Lindsborg, Kansas; A. R. Nelson, Chicago, Illinois; And. Croonholm, Chicago, Illinois; John Hedström, Chicago, Illinois; A. Skoog, St. Paul, Minnesota; J. P. Heggen, Des Moines, Iowa; John Ferm, Lindsborg, Kansas; Edward Johnson, Chicago, Illinois; J. P. Melin, Lake, Indiana; H. Palmblad, Chicago, Illinois; S. Youngquist, Chicago, Illinois; A. Swensen, Chicago, Illinois; J. P. Eagle, Chicago, Illinois; G. Noreen, Wahoo, Nebraska; A. Hallner, Swedeberg, Nebraska; J. A. Hultman, Omaha, Nebraska; A. G. Nelson, Worcester, Massachusetts; A. Mellander, North Easton, Massachusetts; John Hagström, Boston, Massachusetts; S. Lundin, McPherson, Kansas; John Thompson, Gibson, Illinois; O. Peterson, Chicago, Illinois; George Wiberg, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nils Sundeen, Chicago, Illinois; F. M. Johnson, Chicago, Illinois; C. Anderson, Chicago, Illinois.

¹Members on committee on arrangements: F. M. Johnson, C. Anderson, S. Youngquist, H. Palmblad, and J. P. Eagle. Members on committee on credentials: A. Larson, E. A. Skogsbergh, and A. A. Magnuson. Members on program committee: J. Peterson, C. J. Nyvall, C. R. Carlson, S. W. Sundberg, and Th. Norlin.

I have had access to and read the minutes as they appear in the original form in Svenska Evangeliska Missionsförbundets Protokollbok, 1885-1890. For the sake of expediency I will use the printed volume of these minutes entitled Protokollen från Årsmötet, 1885-1890. Missionsförbundets första femårsperiod. Edited by C. V. Bowman. This will hereafter be cited, Bowman (ed.) Protokollen. Both the original minutes and the printed edition are in the Covenant Archives.

Moreover, he was charged both with using opprobrious epithets in connection with the articles and with advising the churches not to participate in the conference. Princell readily acknowledged his authorship, but denied that he was opposed to every kind of organization or coöperative plan. He freely acknowledge that the wording of the invitation did not make him eligible for membership, but professed the hope that the Christian spirit of the meeting might extend beyond the letter of the announcement. Since that spirit had already been manifested through various actions during the meeting, he had hoped for the privilege of becoming a member. After considerable discussion, Princell was, nevertheless, denied the privilege of the floor.¹ Several, however, protested his exclusion and urged that a second vote be taken. In a second vote, the first decision was affirmed but with a smaller majority.² Princell, then, asked for and was given the permission to address the meeting briefly. He reiterated that he had come with the hope that possibly he would be extended a brotherly hand. The initial sermon had inspired such a hope, he said. While he did not question their right to exclude him, he said:

In the future do not say, 'We want to unite with everyone who fears God,' but if you say anything, tell the truth and say, 'We wish to unite only with those we know have sanctioned beforehand a formal union of congregations. We suspected one brother of not being in favor of this and although he desired to share in the union and co-operation of the Christians on a biblical ground, still we did not wish him. . . .even to have a voice in the meeting.'³

Thereupon Princell left the meeting followed by several pastors.⁴

¹Princell, Levnadsminnen, pp. 154-56. The vote was six in favor of and eighteen against giving Princell membership.

²The second vote resulted in eleven favoring membership for Princell and seventeen against the proposal. Ibid., cf. Bowman, The Mission Covenant, pp. 143-44.

³Chicago-Bladet, March 3 and 10, 1885, gives the detailed story of the organizational meeting and of the Princell episode. See also Princell, Levnadsteckning, pp. 154-56. It seems clear that Princell was against synods and denominations, but he appears to have been much in favor of co-operation between the churches. In historical perspective, it seems strange that the meeting did not fully ascertain what Princell really believed before arbitrarily excluding their greatest champion for religious freedom and co-operation--the ideal for which the Läsare had fought in Sweden and, in many instances, in the Lutheran churches of the Augustana Synod.

⁴Pastors K. Erixon, A. L. Anderson, Nordin, Thorell, Davis, and Sahlström left the meeting with Princell.

A committee of five was appointed to speak with him and, if possible, persuade him to recant publicly or at least modify his statements in the Chicago-Bladet. He was reminded that he would not be given membership in the conference until he had publicly retracted his "unchristian epithets." Princell, however, asserted that he had written in a Christian spirit and refused to retract or modify his opinion.¹

The following statement by an eye witness who writes after a lapse of sixty years is illuminating:

From the very start one could sense that the atmosphere was charged with explosives. The discussion preparatory to the conference had been violent, and the opinions clashed and voices thundered during the sessions. Many feared that the opposition would win. But the wise and calm chairman guided the debate to an affirmative decision.²

After the Princell episode, the conference proceeded with its principal business, introduced by a discussion over the question, "Is it right or wrong for Christian churches and societies to unite in work for the kingdom of God, and on what basis can such a union be accomplished?" The result of the discussion was presented in the form of a resolution, unanimously approved and adopted. The resolution affirmed the wisdom of uniting: (1) because the New Testament alludes in numerous places to such practice, (2) it lies in the very nature of Christian life and fellowship, (3) experience has shown that it is serviceable and useful. As to the basis for such a union it was asserted that any Christian unity must be founded on the Word of God, and must "be a union of true believers only, composed of men and women spiritually alive and desirous of brotherly peace, unity, and fellowship."³

The following day, Friday, February 20, the meeting discussed the question: "How can we in a Christian and practical

¹This committee met with Princell on Tuesday, five days after Princell's exclusion. Princell, Levnadsminnen, pp. 156-57.

²Andrew Johnson, "The Birth of the Covenant," The Covenant Weekly, February 16, 1945. Rev. Johnson is one of the Covenant pioneer pastors who was present but not as a delegate. See also Constantin Olson, "När Missionsförbundet bildades," The Covenant Weekly, February 19, 1935, and Svante Lundeen, "When the Covenant Was Organized Fifty Years Ago," The Covenant Weekly, February 19, 1935. Both Olson and Lundeen were delegates to the meeting.

³Bowman (ed.) Protokollen.

way effect a brotherly union between our believing countrymen in America for the propagation of the gospel and the furtherance of a Christian church polity?" The discussion failed to crystallize into a clearly defined plan. Instead a committee of seven was appointed to formulate a tentative constitutional basis for the merger.¹ Moreover, the conference decided to vote on the question of union. When the motion was brought to a vote, only two or three voted in the negative. Spontaneously the assembly rose and united in singing Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," whereupon the chairman invoked God's blessing on the new organization. The secretary of the conference records it as a solemn and unforgettable moment.² E. August Skogsberg, one of the leading personalities at the organizational meeting, published the following report of the meeting in Den Kristna Härelden. Wrote he:

February 20, 1885, is a day that will not soon be forgotten by the brethren who were present at the meeting. It is probably the most important day in the history of the Swedish Mission work in America. . . . That all wanted a union had been proven the day before, but the means of effecting such an organization was the Gordian knot that had to be loosed. Many did not want to see the Mission Synod dissolved. Others hoped that all former organizations would be dissolved and a new beginning made on a new foundation. . . . If the latter faction had held to its idea that the synods must be dissolved, and a new association be built, it is doubtful that the efforts to form the Covenant would have succeeded. Many asked for the floor. The discussion was very lively. One read in the features of almost every one present the uncertainty of the result; yet somehow, it seemed that everyone was anxious that the goal be reached. For a long time everybody spoke as if to sort of feel the pulse of the other fellow.

Finally it became apparent more and more that the dissolution of the Mission Synod at the present time was neither wise nor timely, since one speaker after another said that if they could not join the new organization in a body they would not consider it at all. Now a turn came in the discussion. All spoke in the same vein. They would rather see a tearing down of the old for the purpose of building something new, yet they would be willing to work for a union of churches just as they were organized at present without judging the views held by various members.

This fine spirit of Christian brotherliness began to burn

¹The members of the committee were: Th. Norlin, A. Hallner, A. Larson, S. W. Sundberg, C. R. Carlson, J. P. Eagle, and C. J. Nyvall. Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 9. Cf. Sundberg, "An Outline of History," Covenant Memories, pp. 74-75.

more and more in the hearts of the brethren, until the meeting became so warm, that prayers and wishes in that direction were heard all over, and one could read the zeal and earnestness in the faces of everyone present. Doubts had vanished, and it remained only to make formal announcement that the spirit of brotherliness had triumphed in the meeting. A motion was made that all in favor of a union should stand on their feet, and as far as I was able to determine, there was not one of the members of the meeting, but that he stood up.

Not only members of the meeting but also outsiders who attended stood up in joy and happiness. While we were standing a brother led us in prayer after which the whole congregation enthusiastically joined in the singing of Luther's mighty hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.'

It is impossible to portray the feeling of the meeting. One stood there as if amazed at what had happened. But soon there were brotherly embraces and friendly discussions within small groups. Brethren confessed that they had been like so many goats which had tried to budge each other but had now lost their horns and could now love their brethren whom they had differed with before. It was inspiring to listen to these confessions.¹

The next day the constitution was adopted. It read as follows:

I

Name

The name of this society shall be the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America.

II

Confession

The Covenant accepts the Word of God, the Holy Books of the Old and the New Testament, as the only perfect rule for faith, creed, and conduct.

III

Object

The object of this Covenant is to work for the propagation of the Gospel of Christ and the development of Christian life and co-operation of the individual churches in harmony with the teaching and example of Christ and His Apostles.

¹E. August Skogsberg, "When the Covenant Was Born," Skogsberg's Report in Den Kristna Härölden. It was re-published in English in Veckobladet, December 18, 1834 as well as in the Covenant Weekly, February 19, 1935. For similar reminiscences from this meeting, see Olson, op. cit., and Lundeen, op. cit.

IV

Membership

The Covenant is a union of Christian churches and societies, whether such societies are composed of churches or individual Christians.

The churches and societies which are composed of believing members and want to unite with the Covenant shall apply for membership to the secretary of the Covenant and give the names of the members of the Board. The next conference of the Covenant will act on such applications.

Every church or society united with the Covenant has a right to send two delegates to the conference of the Covenant to represent the organization.

V

Executive Committee

At the annual conference of the Covenant the delegates shall elect an executive committee of seven members; a chairman, a vice chairman, a secretary, a vice secretary, and three trustees of whom one shall act as treasurer. Also two auditors shall be elected who shall audit the accounts of the Covenant and examine the acts of the executive committee. The trustees shall be so elected that one retires and is replaced each year.

VI

Meetings

The Covenant's affairs are managed by the churches and societies through credited delegates who shall assemble once a year in a general conference at a time and place that is decided annually.

VII

Ministers and Recommendations

The ministers that shall be sent out by the Covenant shall have the endorsement and recommendation of the Covenant.

VIII

Changes and Additions

Proposed changes and additions to these By-Laws shall be introduced at an annual conference, but can not be decided upon before the next annual meeting.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 9-11. In the main I have followed the translation as given by Bowman, The Mission Covenant, pp. 145-46. It

On Monday, at the fifth session of the conference, a central board was elected. It was composed of the following members: Chairman, C. A. Björk; Vice Chairman, A. Larson; Secretary, Axel Mellander; Assistant Secretary, A. Hallner; Trustees: Sven Youngquist, C. R. Carlson, and J. O. Heggen.¹ The following day, several items of interest were decided. The central board was to call itinerant preachers to travel over the field when necessary; Dr. P. P. Waldenström of Sweden was extended an invitation to visit the Mission Covenant of America at his earliest convenience; a committee was appointed to draft articles of incorporation; the central board was authorized to receive congregations that apply for membership; and lastly, a committee of three was appointed to investigate the possibilities of affiliating any future educational endeavors with the Congregationalists. Since the overture made by the latter was received favorably by the conference and became a determining force of far reaching consequences for the future of the newly launched Mission Covenant, a further word of explanation is necessary.²

is of interest to note that the committee adopted, with one major change, the constitutional plan prepared by J. G. Princell and A. Larson and presented to the meeting of the Ansgar Synod at Galesburg, Illinois, April 4-10, 1884 and later at Worcester, Massachusetts. The major change occurs in the article on membership where Princell had advocated the privilege of membership for all pastors and laymen interested in the work and known as genuine Christians, in addition to one or two delegates from each Christian church that desired to be represented; in other words, a representation of individuals as over against a representation of churches and societies as voted on by the Covenant. Thus, with the exception of the article on membership and some minor changes in detail, Princell's plan, based largely on the constitutional provisions of the Mission Covenant in Sweden, became the constitution of the Swedish Mission Covenant of America. See Chicago-Bladet, March 3, 22, 1885. Cf. Princell, Levnadsminnen, pp. 157-58.

¹Bowman (ed.) Protokollen, pp. 11-12.

²Ibid., pp. 12-14. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Theological Seminary had appointed a committee consisting of Pastors F. E. Emrich and M. W. Montgomery and Professor Samuel Ives Curtiss to attend the organizational meeting of the Covenant and to bring greetings. Professor H. M. Scott was appointed to the same committee by the Chicago Ministers' Union. This committee invited C. A. Björk, E. August Skogsbergh, S. W. Sundberg, John Wenstrand, and Andrew Hallner to discuss a plan whereby a Swedish theological department could be established for the Swedish free churches in conjunction with the seminary. Missions-Vänner, February 25, 1885; also Winfred Rhoades, Frederick Ernest Emrich (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1933), pp. 27 ff.

The rapid increase in Swedish immigration during the 1880's¹ had attracted the attention of the American Congregationalists who had already extended, through the American Home Missionary Society, financial assistance to many Swedish Lutheran and Mission churches. This friendly interest on their part gained new impetus when Dr. M. W. Montgomery, partly for reasons of health and partly from a desire to study the free church movements, visited Sweden and Norway in 1884. Montgomery carried letters of introduction (one of which from E. August Skogsbergh) to influential leaders. In Sweden he visited schools, churches, and mission societies, and interviewed such leaders as Waldenström and Ekman. He reported his observations to the secretaries of the American Home Missionary Society who, in turn, published his findings in a book entitled, "A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway." It was a sympathetic account of the people, customs, beliefs, and especially the great revival which had swept those countries. It included the observation that the great revival had resulted in an outburst of Congregationalism in Scandinavia. "There is little or no difference except in name and language between these congregations and ours," he wrote, closing with an appeal to his denominational leaders to support the Scandinavian immigrant converts in the New World.² Moreover, he suggested that Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish ministers be given financial aid by appropriations from the Home Mission Board; that a Swedish and Norwegian or Danish teacher be engaged by the Chicago Theological Seminary for instructing young men who felt called to preach the gospel among their fellow countrymen in America; that financial aid be given the mission institutes in Vinlöv and Kristinehamn, Sweden, and that mission institutes be established in Norway and Denmark. As we shall see, the denomination acted on the first two proposals.³

At the organizational meeting in Chicago, in February,

¹In the decade 1861-1870, 88,731 Swedish emigrants came to America; in the period 1871-1880, the number had increased to 101,169; and during 1881-1890, 324,285 emigrants had arrived from Sweden. See Florence Janson, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

²M. W. Montgomery, A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1885).

³*Ibid.*, pp. 111-12; cf. Bowman, The Mission Covenant, pp. 163-65.

1885, three of the members of the Chicago Theological Seminary, H. M. Scott, S. I. Curtiss, and F. E. Emrich were introduced to the conference.¹ They carried letters addressed to Dr. Waldenström which contained a formal call by the seminary board to any competent teacher whom Waldenström should select and recommend to become instructor in a proposed Swedish department of the seminary. Moreover, they invited a committee of the Swedish pastors to discuss a plan whereby the Swedish department could be established and made available for the Covenant students.² The meeting afterwards appointed Björk, Wenstrand and F. M. Johnson to meet with the Congregationalist leaders and take suitable measures.³ This joint committee met during March and April. It does not appear that Björk evinced any great enthusiasm for the pending educational question. With many others he was at heart opposed to a theological school. Their reaction to education is reflected in the following statement.

They themselves were self-educated pastors, who had preached for many years with marked success, and this caused them to consider a school unnecessary, even detrimental in its effect on young men preparing for the ministry. Pastor C. A. Björk was one of those who opposed the suggestion of training preachers in a theological seminary. He suggested that young men, who felt the call to enter the ministry of the gospel, should become assistants to older pastors for a few weeks or months.⁴

To insure the greatest measure of success in their educational work among the Mission Friends, the Congregationalists were

¹Evidently they had held some preliminary talks with the above mentioned Mission Friend pastors prior to their appearance at the first business session on Thursday, February 19. In the report given under the caption "The German and Scandinavian Departments in Our Seminary," the writer speaks of the presence of the Congregational leaders as follows: "The most important sittings were attended by Mr. Emrich, Professor Curtiss and Superintendent Montgomery, and on different occasions we were invited to deliver our message on behalf of the Congregational ministers of Chicago and our own seminary." See Minutes of Tenth Triennial Convention held at Chicago, April 22, 1885 (Chicago: Chicago Theological Seminary).

²Missions-Vänner, February 25, 1885; also Winfred Rhoades, *op. cit.*, cf. Bowman, The Mission Covenant, p. 165.

³Bowman (ed.) Protokollen, p. 14.

⁴Andrew Johnson, "The Birth of the Covenant," Covenant Weekly, February 16, 1945. Rev. Johnson was present at the organizational meeting and gives his reminiscences in this article.

naturally anxious to have the good will and active support of Björk, the President of the new organization. To that end they cultivated his friendship. Thus we find Björk present at their Triennial Convention in Chicago in 1885 and introduced to the Convention by Prof. Curtiss.¹ After much hesitation, Björk was finally prevailed upon to travel to Sweden at Congregational expense to deliver their letter personally to Waldenström and if possible bring back the answer in the person of the selected teacher.

Björk sailed for Sweden on May 13, 1885. In his consultation with Waldenström, two men were suggested. The first candidate was either unwilling or unable to accept the position. Thereupon, the call was extended to the Reverend Fridolph Risberg, a former minister in the Swedish state church and now a pastor in the Mission Covenant of Sweden and an ardent supporter of the free church movement. Risberg accepted and arrived with Björk in Chicago, September 6, 1885. A few days later he began his academic work in the Swedish Department of the Chicago Theological Seminary.²

When the first annual meeting of the Covenant convened at Princeton, Illinois, September 28, 1885, Björk presented the report of the school committee. The committee, which had been authorized to "do the best it could," reported the establishment of a Swedish department as a part of the Chicago Theological Seminary and the appointment of Fridolph Risberg to the Swedish Professorship.³ Through representatives, the faculty of the seminary also gave a lengthy report of seminary work and in conclusion answered three questions proposed by the Covenant officials. The questions were: (1) On what conditions will students be admitted to the Swedish department? (2) What is the relationship

¹Minutes of the Tenth Triennial Convention held at Chicago, April 22, 1885, in connection with the Chicago Theological Seminary.

²Fridolph Risberg, Strödda minnen från mitt flydda liv (Chicago: Missions-Vännens Bokförlag, 1916), pp. 101-14. This is Risberg's autobiographical account. See also O. C. Grauer, "The Swedish Institute of the Chicago Theological Seminary," Historical Records Regarding the Swedish Institute, 1885-1916. Chicago: Chicago Theological Seminary Archives. See also letter from O. C. Grauer to Gerhard Palmgren dealing with the Swedish Department later changed to the Swedish Institute. Scandinavian Alliance Archives, Chicago Theological Seminary.

³Bowman (ed.) Protokollen, pp. 24-25, 30.

of students to the Swedish churches? (3) What is Professor Risberg's relationship to the Chicago Theological Seminary? Replying to these questions, the Congregationalists stated that the requirements for admittance to the Swedish department would be the same as for the American, that students were free to determine their own relationship to the Swedish churches, and that Professor Risberg's relationship to the seminary was the same as that of any other faculty member.¹

Confronted with a fait accompli, the delegates elected a committee of five to present recommendations on the educational question.² This committee recommended the following measures: (1) the Covenant agrees to continue the school for another year; (2) the Covenant, in accordance with the suggestion by the Congregationalists, appoints a committee of three to supervise, in conjunction with the American directors, the Swedish department within the seminary; (3) the Swedish committee is to be given the responsibility of ascertaining the condition of the school and of reporting to the annual meeting of the Covenant.³ Later in the meeting, A. Hallner expressed the appreciation of the conference to the American representatives for their interest in the school problem. Professor Curtiss and Pastor Emrich responded cordially, and the latter presented a contribution for the Castle Garden Mission in New York and promised to have tracts for this mission supplied at a cheaper rate than those prevailing.⁴

Other important business matters included appropriations to the Castle Garden Mission, the appointment of itinerant preachers to travel in the interest of the Covenant, the incorporation of the organization,⁵ the admission to membership of all applicants recognized as bona fide pastors,⁶ and the formal admission

¹Ibid., pp. 25-29.

²Ibid. Members on this committee were E. A. Skogsbergh, Fridolph Risberg, C. Carlson, C. A. Björk, and A. Larson.

³A. G. Nelson, John Wenstrand, and C. A. Björk were elected members of the school committee. Bowman (ed.) Protokollen, p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

⁵Ibid., pp. 30-40.

⁶Ibid., p. 40. The roster of conference delegates contained the names of thirty-eight pastors. The secretary, however,

of forty-seven congregations and one district society as members of the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America.¹ In the election of a central board, C. A. Björk was re-elected chairman.²

makes the notation that this list does not represent the entire ministerial membership and urges pastors who desire to unite with the Covenant to make application to the secretary (Ed. note).

¹The executive board had been authorized at the organizational meeting to receive qualified congregations into the membership of the Covenant. Its action was now formally ratified and the status of an additional number of churches was examined and accepted. Churches considered members at the first annual meeting were The Mission Tabernacle, Chicago, Illinois; The Ebed Melek Church, North Easton, Massachusetts; The Second Swedish Lutheran Church, Galesburg, Illinois; The Free Church, Peatonica, Illinois; such member churches of the Mission Synod as the congregations in Lundby and Red Wing, Minnesota; Enterprise, Kansas; Marielund, Wisconsin; Salem, Kandiyohi Co., Minnesota; Sioux City, Iowa; St. Paul, Minnesota; Rockford, Illinois; Fremont, Iowa; Saron, Nebraska; Bethesda, Nebraska; Keokuk, Iowa; Phelps Center, Nebraska; Fridhem, Nebraska; Spring Garden, Minnesota; Salem, Burt Co., Nebraska; Karmel, Dodge Co., Nebraska; Muskegon, Michigan; Salina, Kansas; Stanton, Iowa; Omaha, Nebraska; Paxton, Illinois; Lafayette, Indiana; Grand Rapids, Michigan; De Kalb, Illinois; Whitehall, Michigan; Manistee, Michigan; Stockholm (Douglas Park) Chicago; Lindsborg, Kansas; Randolph, Kansas; Lost Grove (Lanyon), Iowa; Moingona, Iowa; Center City, Minnesota; Mission Church (North Side) Chicago; Princeton, Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa; Swede Bend, Iowa; Cadillac, Michigan; Duluth, Minnesota; Lockport, Illinois; Joliet, Illinois; Angus, Boone Co., Iowa; Aurora, Nebraska; and the Northwestern District Society. At this meeting the Mission Synod in a communication from Rev. Andrew E. Wenstrand, its chairman, requested membership for the synod in the Mission Covenant. Official action had been taken at the annual meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, 1885. The letter from Wenstrand to the Mission Covenant is dated August 14, 1885. It is deposited in the Covenant Archives. In a letter of response, the Mission Covenant through its chairman and secretary informed the central board of the Mission Synod that "in accordance with its request, the Mission Synod was accepted" into membership of the Covenant and that such churches of the synod as had made a written request were likewise accepted into full membership. The acceptance of the synod as a whole did not automatically confer membership on the member churches of the synod. Björk and Hallner, however, urged the Mission Synod to secure information with regard to the remaining congregations. See Bowman (ed.) Protokollen, p. 20. Cf. Letter to Mission Synod under signature of C. A. Björk and A. Hallner, dated November 17, 1885. Covenant Archives.

²Other members of the executive board were S. W. Sundberg, vice chairman; A. Hallner, secretary; A. Mellander, vice chairman; S. Youngquist, J. O. Heggen, and C. R. Carlson, trustees.

